



AZV responds to the situation at Horacio E. Oduber Hospital

Ru Croes, Director of the Algemene Ziektekosten Verzekering (AZV) Aruba's governing agency regarding their nationalized health care, called a press conference to clarify the stance of the AZV regarding work stoppages at the Horacio E. Oduber Hospital.

At the beginning of 2007, existing work contracts with hospital workers expired, and the hospital management has been in negotiations with employees for the past nine months, to the satisfaction of neither party. Because of this, there have been small work stoppages in different departments, but a general strike is threatened by employees in an attempt to settle the dispute.

According to the staff of the AZV, which allots the funds to the hospital for operation, this is a something for which the hospital must accept responsibility, rather than turning to the AZV for additional funds. AZV employees report that hospital management is citing lack of funds from AZV to workers for the hold up in reaching a settlement. The position of the AZV is that the hospital has received their budgeted funds for the year, and they are obligated to operate within their budget, including the negotiation and distribution of new and higher salaries, as workers would expect when signing a new contract.

Mr. Croes revealed that the Horacio E. Oduber Hospital has received steady increments in their budget since 2003, when their budget was 79,100,000 Aruban florins (\$45,200, 000.) In 2004 they received a 10% increase, in 2005 a 6% increase, in 2006 a 5% increase, and in 2007 a 2% increase bringing their allotment to 99,800,000 florins (\$57,028,571.) The renegotiations of the worker's contracts were taken into account when AZV decided on the 2007 budget for the hospital.

It is the opinion of the AZV that the hospital cannot rely on the AZV to provide funds whenever they show a deficit, the hospital administration must learn to run the institution more efficiently and on a "break –even basis."

"The sky is not the limit," stated Mr. Croes, and his question to hospital administrators is "where are we going over the next four years?" AZV expressed that they believe the amount budgeted at this time is sufficient, and the hospital must "trim the fat" of various departments to allocate funds for the new contracts. The AZV reminds the public that they must regulate many aspects of Aruban health care, not only the hospital, so their budget must also "break-even," and they are taking strong steps to see that, and curb abuses of the system.

Regarding the current negotiations, Mr. Croes says that the stance of the AZV is that there will be no additional funds to the hospital this year, and that the hospital must learn to work within their annual budget, of which they were well aware in 2006, and should have registered any dissatisfaction with the amount at that time.